

COMMENTARY

THE THREE HORSEMEN OF THE ARAB WASTELAND

Hashish, Bakshish, Maalesh

RAY ALAN

THERE are three stars on the Syrian flag: one stands for *Hashish*, one for *Bakshish*, the third for *Maalesh*—or so any American or British official in the Near East will assure you. If this were but the poor joke, in dubious taste, that it sounds, it would be unworthy of repetition; but it provides a clue to the nature of the triple malady infecting, to a greater or lesser degree, the entire Arab Orient.

Hashish is the narcotic that in the early 30's claimed an addict in almost every Egyptian home. But for a talented British police officer, Russell Pasha, it would have destroyed the Egyptian nation. Most of the hashish smuggled into Egypt is grown in Syria and Lebanon. When these two states were under French mandate, aircraft scoured

mountain and plain every summer in search of the forbidden crop. Even this intensive campaign failed to prevent Zahle, an important hashish marketing center, from becoming the richest provincial town in Lebanon. Since 1946 there have been no French planes to detect hashish and, despite the efforts of the Lebanese government, today production is soaring. It is one of the Levant states' most important exports. The director of the Egyptian anti-narcotic bureau, Safwat Bey, puts the value of last year's crop at around sixty million dollars and admits that Egyptian customs men, coast guards, and frontier patrols were unable to intercept more than a quarter of it.

The main hashish-smuggling route from the Levant states to Egypt ran through Palestine up to the end of the British Mandate there. Since then it has been cut by Israel and has switched eastward to Jordan—enriching that unique state slightly and probably easing the British taxpayer's burden. Small caravans of smugglers sometimes sneak by night across the northern Negev from Hebron to Egyptian-occupied Gaza, risking a brush with Israeli patrols, and Arab League circles are slyly setting into circulation the rumor that Israel is helping the traffic; but most of the hashish entering Egypt now goes by way of the Gulf of Aqaba and the Sinai desert. A favorite trick

ALL observers agree that in the Arab states an old order is dying—but is there any sign of a new order waiting to be born? What is the present state of mind of the dominant forces in the Arab countries? How does this affect the chances for a peaceful settlement with the new State of Israel? What is its significance for Western attempts to buttress the Near East against the Soviet threat? RAY ALAN here writes a candid first-hand report that analyzes the conditions which, in his opinion, will make these states a danger zone in international affairs for many years to come. Mr. Alan travels regularly throughout the Near East and is a frequent contributor to the *London Tribune*.

of the Sinai Bedouin is to force camels to swallow plastic containers crammed with hashish, lead them openly across the Suez Canal bridges, where there are the strictest controls, and then slaughter them on the outskirts of Ismailia and Suez. Metal containers were originally used until Russell Pasha ordered canal guards to pass a mine detector over the bellies of the camels.

BAKSHISH is that little something the Levantine official has in mind when, absently rubbing his thumb and forefinger together, he says: "No. Impossible!" It is the oil in every administrative machine in the Arab world.

Parliamentary seats in South Lebanon sell for about fifteen thousand dollars—and the average investor does his best to secure at least a 100 per cent return on his outlay during his four-year term of office. At the time of the last great cholera epidemic in Egypt, in 1947, travelers entering or leaving the country at one point beside the Suez Canal had the choice of scorching in the sun for an hour outside a government quarantine post or paying a dollar bakshish for an immediate clearance certificate and exemption from medical examination. Cholera serum donated to Egypt by friendly governments all over the world was dispensed at many emergency centers in Cairo only on payment of an Egyptian pound (three dollars) bakshish; thousands of Egyptians who didn't have the money were inoculated with water. One of the wealthiest landowners in Upper Egypt made thirty thousand dollars out of the serum he received (*gratis*) for the inoculation of his fellahin—who, naturally, never saw it. Egypt's embryo social security and free-education schemes, two well-intentioned gestures by the Wafdist government, are rapidly having their heart eaten out by the bakshish habit.

Palestine Arab refugees in Lebanon can obtain a Lebanese passport and Lebanese citizenship—for about a hundred and fifty dollars' bakshish. A Lebanese I met last winter in Cairo, on the other hand, is leading a wretched existence because he does not

possess a passport. Like many thousands of Arabs he was working illegally in Palestine up to the end of the British Mandate; then he fled southward to Egypt. Relatives in his home town have confirmed to the Lebanese authorities that he is indeed Lebanese and entitled to a passport to enable him to return; but, as one of them wrote recently, "The machine needs greasing."

Last year the Syrian government announced a press law forcing newspapers to publish financial statements and forbidding editors to accept bribes and subsidies. The entire press ceased publication in protest and newspaper owners queued angrily outside Premier Khaled el-Azm's door. The law was withdrawn. The reasons for its introduction in the first place are interesting. Very few Syrian and Lebanese papers are self-supporting. Even the leading dailies rarely sell more than a thousand copies. Most papers are published primarily to further the political or business interests of a family or clique; some, with circulations of only a few hundred, exist simply to earn "contributions" from Arab personalities willing to purchase immunity from criticism; almost all look for subsidies to the legations of the big powers or other Arab states. (For instance, it has recently been established with certainty that a large number of Egyptian papers have been taking quite heavy bakshish from the Soviets, as reward for following an anti-Western and neutralist line on Korea, Near Eastern defense, etc.) This system itself, however, worried the Syrian government less than the use Syria's enemies were making of it: the Hashemite rulers of Iraq and Jordan, who have for long been trying to pluck up the courage to annex their republican neighbors, had suddenly begun buying widespread support in the Damascus press.

MAALASH—"It doesn't matter"—is the word every Western visitor to the Arab states learns either just before or just after bakshish. It comes to represent a unique Arab phenomenon which alternately infuriates and delights, combining the ener-

vating fatalism of Islam with an irresponsibility that is often callous but also often charming. I have heard an Arab refuse the offer of a car to take his injured baby daughter to a hospital: "Maalesh; it was the will of Allah: and Allah never did like daughters, anyway. . . ." I have heard "Maalesh" from an Arab who had just had his house wrecked in a storm and from a man wanted by the police as he swaggered off to his usual seat in a café.

This spirit of "maalesh," by the moral irresponsibility it encourages, has for long played havoc with Arab politics and economics. It led the Palestine Arab leaders to transfer as much of their wealth as possible to Cairo and Beirut and then declare war on the Jews from a safe distance—leaving the disorganized masses to an unpredictable fate. It produced these leaders' orders for a mass evacuation of Haifa, Jaffa, and other towns "to clear the way for our Liberation Army." In this way it played a large role in creating the Arab refugee problem, for which the Arabic press and handouts of the Arab League and Arab Higher Committee blame Britain and America. It is prolonging the sufferings of the refugees themselves. King Ibn Saud and the Sheikh of Kuwait alone could finance the resettlement of nearly half of Palestine from the millions of dollars they have received in personal oil royalties in the past few years, while multimillionaire King Farouk could help a sizeable proportion of the rest with part of the vast income he earns (legitimately and otherwise, and overlooking his confiscation of his mother's property) from his agricultural estates, urban investments, night clubs, and the Egyptian treasury. Yet the whole Arab League's contribution to these unhappy victims has been insignificant. "Maalesh! Allah—and America and Britain—will provide."

The Palestine conflict taught Western officials in the Near East some of the lessons their Far Eastern colleagues learned in China, for even this issue, with its tremendous—indeed, unique—appeal to Arab nationalist and religious sentiment, was not big enough to predominate over corruption and

personal profit-seeking. The ex-Mufti of Jerusalem and his assistants made fortunes from various Save-Palestine funds; and Palestine Arabs, Lebanese, Syrians, and Egyptians alike sold arms to the Jewish forces—in some cases after the Arab League's invasion of Israel had begun.

JUST before large-scale fighting broke out, Mohammed el-Hawari, leader of the paramilitary Arab Nejada organization, was trying to smuggle arms into Palestine from Egypt; but, as he mournfully told me, in every case either the Sinai Bedouins who were transporting the arms or the Palestinian reception groups who took them over sold them to Jewish settlements before he could get them to Jaffa. Even confiscated Jewish weapons which the British authorities had dumped into the sea were being fished out by Arabs, he said, cleaned up, and sold back to Haganah. An enchanting story is that of the shipload of Czech arms intended for Syria which the Italian authorities intercepted in the Adriatic during the first few weeks of the invasion of Israel. The Italians had received information that the arms were to be diverted, on Cominform orders, to the Italian Communist party whose underground arsenals had been seriously depleted by police raids. The Syrian government sent a mission of officers, headed by a relative of a former prime minister, to Italy to negotiate for the release of the cargo. Their mission was successful; but then the Syrian officers met an Israeli purchasing mission seeking desperately to buy arms. There was a hasty exchange of ciphered telegrams between the Syrian officers and their minister of war, Ahmed Sharabati, in Damascus—and the entire Czech cargo was sold to Israel at a satisfactory profit!

The widely reported Egyptian arms scandal, in which several of Egypt's highest officers were involved, is too recent to need detailed recapitulation here; and now another is believed to be on the way. The American press has already taken cognizance of Cairo rumors, of the kind that are usually confirmed six months later when the cul-

prits are safely away in Switzerland, which say the Russians have succeeded in obtaining by bribery from senior Egyptian officers details of the still top-secret Centurion tank supplied to Egypt by Britain. The utter frivolity which alone can have guided those responsible in Whitehall for the decision to supply Centurions to a country whose army and administration are notoriously among the most corrupt in the world is beyond all comprehension.

MAALESH and the venality engendered by the bakshish habit present a terrible obstacle to Western governments anxious both to teach the Arab states that reform is the best barrier against revolution and to strengthen their defenses—economic, political, and moral, as well as military—against Communism. America and Britain can, if they wish, pour millions into the Arab states to finance development, but their representatives in the Near East know that an immense rake-off will vanish into private pockets. All the Arab states need imaginative projects to raise the abysmally wretched living standards of their masses and save them from the fate of China. In some states, despite past help from the Western powers, despite loans, subsidies, oil royalties, and the services of Western experts, living standards are falling. The average Egyptian peasant must today support his family on half the lands his grandfather had for the same purpose eighty years ago, so fast is the population growing and so rapaciously have big landowners swallowed up individual small holdings after having ruined the fellahin working them. The average Iraqi peasant is worse off today, after twenty years of independence, than at the end of the last century under the Turks. Like his Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian, and Persian counterpart he is the victim of a soulless system of feudal absentee landlordism which holds him in thrall and turns more and more land into desert each year. The landowner takes the lion's share of every crop and in most cases puts not so much as a sack of fertilizer back into the earth for the

privilege. The wealth of the countryside is siphoned off into the cities to support an ostentatiously extravagant mode of living for the very few while the many starve. Peasants are so poor they burn the dung of their livestock as fuel—even manure is a luxury. Diseased, downtrodden, and indebted, the Arab masses have neither incentive nor opportunity to better themselves—short of cutting their rulers' throats.

These simple but sinister facts, reverberating through the Near East like the drum call of a revolution, are now penetrating through even the thickest palace and embassy walls; but their significance—even after the dramatic course of events in Iran—is only beginning to be understood. By carefully husbanding their resources, and by taxing their wealth, the Arab governments might carry out numerous vital reforms and launch—at least—minor development schemes, thus gaining in internal stability while persuading Western governments and investors of their sincerity of purpose. But the Arab rulers will neither pass on, nor pool, their vast oil royalties: they prefer to bank them overseas, against the rainy day of possible exile their own selfishness is bringing steadily nearer, or squander them on luxuries like the two-million-dollar hundred-bedroom harem a Saudi Emir has ordered.

How does the average Arab react to the moral chaos around him? The peasants and tribesmen, of course, have no political voice and generally feel themselves to be so ill-informed and impotent that they are apathetic; the basic problem of staying alive is big enough to occupy their full time. The city Arab is little better off though he has one weapon, forged for him by his masters—that of violent demonstration. The Arab rulers, to inflate their own nuisance value, developed the technique from the mid-20's on of organizing "spontaneous" anti-Zionist demonstrations annually on Balfour Day and whenever impressionable Western VIP's and international missions were around. Demonstrations were also found to be a use-

ful lever for the extraction of concessions on other matters from the British and French. It is, further, customary—almost obligatory—in the Arab world for rival sheikhs and political leaders to put on, from time to time, huge rowdy demonstrations of their respective “supporters”—more often than not hired in the nearest slum at a few piasters a head—to impress the world at large with their popularity. In Beirut, on Christmas Day and the Prophet’s Birthday, rival crowds of Christians and Moslems are led by their chiefs into the main squares to cheer and fire rifles into the air (a traditional Arab sign of rejoicing) to prove to anyone who’s interested that one community is better and stronger than the other. In Damascus, early in 1949, a locally made film was shown depicting the Syrian army’s glorious victory in Palestine; shots of President Shukri Kuwatli (since deposed) were crosscut with nauseating frequency into action shots of the troops, looking their slickest and most aggressive, in the hope that the public might draw the desired inference; and every time the film was shown the front three rows of seats were occupied by a clique of Palestine refugees who had been hired to cheer whenever the President appeared on the screen.

But the monster has felt the might of its own muscles. In recent years the city Arab has taken increasingly to demonstrating with genuine spontaneity in what he conceives to be his own interest. In Egypt and Iraq particularly, governments have come to live in genuine fear of the “Souq” (market, coffeeshop center, gathering place). In Bagdad, in 1948, the Souq threw out the Anglo-Iraq treaty, which the late Mr. Bevin had proclaimed to be the cornerstone of his new Near Eastern policy, and incidentally threw half the city’s police force into the river Tigris. In Cairo, the Souq is strong enough to destroy any government which signed a new Anglo-Egyptian treaty on any basis other than complete evacuation of British forces from the Suez Canal zone and the Sudan. Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, the Sudan, and even well-policed Jordan, have

all experienced angry demonstrations protesting against the rising cost of living and airing other social and political grievances.

THE educated Arab tends to do one of four things. First, if he has money—and with rare exceptions he would not be educated if he did not—he may choose to ignore the conditions around him and retire behind a screen of Westernism or Arab traditionalism. I know Lebanese and Palestinian Arabs of this type who go so far as to prefer speaking French or English to Arabic even with their wives and Arab friends; they read French or English books and newspapers and might almost be foreigners to their own people. It is very common in Beirut to hear whole family groups of Lebanese speaking French in public places—there is a certain amount of calculated snobbism in this, of course—and the newspaper with the biggest circulation in the Levant states is printed in French. Westernized Lebanese, in particular, often hate to be called Arabs: they reserve the word Arab to mean strictly the wild and woolly tribesmen and fellahin of the Bekaa, Syria, and Arabia proper. At the other extreme there are educated “escapist” Arabs who drug themselves to oblivion of modern times with the magic of their language, with the beauty of its pre-Islamic and medieval poetry, or the obscurities of Sufi theology, and refuse to read anything written more recently than seven centuries ago; for them the Arab world all but ceased to exist with the passing of the Abbasids.

Secondly, the educated Arab may try to emigrate. Scores of thousands of Lebanese and Syrians and Christians from the Bethlehem area of Palestine have settled permanently in North and South America and West Africa because their own countries cannot offer them a decent livelihood.

Third, he may compromise with the evil around him and throw himself cynically into the racket of political, official, and business life.

Or, fourth, he may decide to try to work for a better society. If he does this conspicuously and outspokenly, and has no

powerful friends, he will soon see the inside of a prison where he will share a common cell with murderers, thieves, lunatics, and Jews caught trying to emigrate to Israel; he may even be interned for a year or two in an amateurish but extremely unpleasant kind of concentration camp—Naqrat es-Salman, in Iraq, is the worst, but Bayir, in Jordan, and Miyeh-Miyeh and Baalbek, in Lebanon, are quite famous. If, sensibly, he decides against running a one-man reform movement, there are three kinds of political movement eager to receive him: the Moslem Brotherhood, the Communist party, and a few follow-the-leader fascist-type parties.

THE Moslem Brotherhood (Ikhwan el-Muslimin) is strongest in Egypt; it was banned there at the end of 1948 after carrying out a number of terrorist outrages, but recently the Egyptian government, yielding to the Souq, lifted the ban. The Brotherhood seeks to reform Arab society by achieving a puritanical religious revival, replacing secular legislation by Koranic law, and ruthlessly striking down prominent individuals judged to be outrageously immoral or insufficiently devoted to Islam. It is anti-Jewish, anti-Christian, and anti-Western, is organized in secret cells, has a few secret arsenals, and enjoys occasional benevolent smiles from the Russian legation in Cairo.

The Communist party is officially banned throughout the Arab world but flourishes quite happily underground, rooted deep down in the abysmal misery of the masses and the despair of embittered intellectuals. The West helps it by appearing irretrievably committed to bolstering up the existing feudal squalor. Communism is strongest in Lebanon—exceptionally favored, by Near Eastern standards, with schools and universities (mainly American and French), which turn out annually onto the overcrowded labor market a regular quota of disgruntled intellectuals who, refusing to work on the family farm now that they are educated, drift almost inevitably leftward. A surprisingly high proportion of Lebanon's established professional men—doctors, lawyers,

teachers—are also Communists and they act as a nucleus and a leaven for the rest. Communism is gaining supporters rapidly in Egypt and among the Arab refugees in Jordan, and has a solid, well-led, and growing hard core of adherents in Syria. The students, oil workers, and Kurdish townsfolk of Iraq are also riddled with Communism and that country has, in addition to the orthodox cellular Communist party organization, an influential number of overt "left-nationalist" parties and committees which act as recruiting centers for their big brother underground. The Arab Communists are now strongly anti-Jewish, not merely anti-Zionist, and organize listening groups (often without their "guests" realizing they are being organized) in cafés, private houses, and even mosques, to popularize Moscow's frequent broadcast diatribes against Israel.

The fascist-type parties have suffered a decline since the former Lebanese premier, Riad Bey es-Solh, routed the best known of them, the Hezb el-Qawmi (or PPS—Parti Populaire Syrien), and executed its leader, Anton Saadi. In its heyday this party had Chaplinesque emblems, salutes, a march step, rallies, Gauleiters, and all. It survives underground in Lebanon and carries on half-hearted public activities in Syria but is not likely to re-emerge as a threat to authority. It does not make anti-Zionism a major plank in its platform: Saadi and his henchmen did, in fact, admire Jewish efficiency in Palestine and soon after the foundation of Israel are believed to have sent envoys to Haifa with a request for arms and aid in seizing power. Pierre Gemayel's Kata'eb (Falangist) movement is popular among the Maronite Christians of Lebanon but is too closely tied to that one community ever to win countrywide support. Its aims are rather like those professed by Pétain in his Vichy days—*Travail, Famille, Patrie*—and the movement is outspokenly critical of the Arab League: it obviously fears that the Christians of Lebanon may one day be submerged in a pan-Islamic tide and for this reason is not unfavorably disposed toward Israel. In Egypt, Misr el-Fatat, a fascist-

minded organization, passes itself off as socialistic, as does Saleh Jabre's new—and predominantly Shiite—National Socialist party in Iraq. Both are anti-Jewish and "neutralist" in foreign policy; both say they seek to clean up public administration.

Not a very promising field, this, for a would-be reformer to work in; yet these are the only parties an Arab can join if he wishes to engage in reformist activity. They are, in fact, with the exception of the Wafd in Egypt, the only parties as such, on Western standards, with a more or less clearly defined program and coherent organization. The dozens of other "parties" in the Arab states are no more than family or local groups firmly entrenched—whether they be in power or in opposition—in the bakshish-maalesh rut of graft and irresponsibility. The Wafd has been mistakenly described outside Egypt as a kind of Labor party: it is, of course, nothing of the sort, and while perceptive enough—on the prompting of its intelligent minister of education, Taha Hussein—to realize that mild measures, at least, must be taken to ease the misery of the masses, it remains dedicated to the maintenance of the pashas' privileges and stupidly allows corruption in its own ranks and at all levels of the administration to vitiate what few reforms it has managed to initiate.

FEW contemporary figures are more tragically isolated than intelligent, progressive Arabs like Taha Hussein and Lebanon's Charles Malik. They are honest, sincere, and humanitarian, and they advocate enlightened measures in international assemblies as ably as anyone; but they are more remote from the mass of their compatriots than the moon. The more respect they earn in the West, the more violently they are calumniated by press and public opinion at home. As Charles Malik, for instance, has gained in stature at the United Nations, the Beirut press has taken more and more to denouncing him as an imperialist lackey, an American hireling, etc., etc. (No, none of these is a Communist organ: this is the everyday idiom of Arabic journalism.) Re-

cently Dr. Malik was reported to have declared that the Arabs would not be unwilling to cooperate with Israel in the event of a third world war. Beirut howled for his blood. Azzam Pasha, secretary general of the Arab League, went out of his way to denounce Malik to a gathering of Turkish journalists and to assure them that the Arab League (which actually hardly exists except on paper) would not support the democracies in a third world war whether or not Israel were involved; would never cooperate with Israel; and had not changed its view that Israel ought to "disappear." Clearly, the statesmanship of men like Charles Malik in the Arab world is for export only.

Only once in modern times has a reformer succeeded in sweeping out a corner of the Arab stables. He lasted four and a half months. He had no party but climbed to power—in March 1949—by means of a military *coup d'état*, encouraged by France and smiled upon by the United States. He was a Kurdish colonel in the Syrian army named Husni Zaim. (*Zaim*, by a curious coincidence, means "leader" and is the title would-be *Fuehrers* adopt in the Arab states.)

Syria went into raptures over Zaim's putsch. Many of the cheers were those Syrians and Arabs generally will give any strong man, anyone who is winning—the messages of congratulation delivered to Zaim were repeated, word for word, by the same unblushing chiefs and delegations to Colonel Sami Hinnawi the morning after he had supervised Zaim's overthrow and "execution"—but most of the rejoicing was sincere. Zaim promised Syria her first free elections and land reform. He even dared to attack religious vested interests and gave educated women the vote for the first time in Syria. His onslaught on corruption and profiteering cleaned up Syrian public life unrecognizably. He adopted a realistic policy toward Israel, even expressing his willingness to meet Ben Gurion, and courageously informed Turkey that Syria renounced her claims on the Sanjak of Alexandretta. But he infuriated the Hashemite rulers of Iraq and Jordan, who just before the *coup d'état*

had been making yet another of their preparations to take Syria over. Hashemite influence was certainly behind Zaim's abduction and "execution" by Colonel Hinnawi in August of that year, though Hinnawi had himself quite genuinely been shocked by Zaim's proposals for land reform and the emancipation of women. One of his first statements to the press, after the counter-revolt, criticized Zaim's practice of allowing Madame Zaim to appear with him at public functions!

THE United States State Department's sympathy for Zaim is interesting to recall. Britain was at the time in the midst of realizing the extent of the moral, political, and strategic disaster into which she had plunged herself in the Near East; ten years of abject appeasement of the Arab rulers had lost her her best friends and assets in the area. America, on the other hand, had amateurishly flouted the Arabs and—to her own amazement—gained their respect. Within a week of President Truman's *de jure* recognition of Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Lebanon all granted America important new oil and pipeline concessions, King Ibn Saud announced that he would raise his Washington representative to ambassadorial status, and the Egyptian premier called for closer Arab-American understanding and even some form of alliance! This led American diplomats to appreciate that the present Arab rulers need the West far more vitally than the West needs them and to realize the need for an economic approach to Near Eastern questions. If, they began to reason, one could only get the Arabs interested in something more tangible than this will-o'-the-wisp pan-Arabism which has led the British down the slope, if one could persuade them to get along without graft and carry out a few reforms and a bit of development, if they could somehow find an Ataturk. . . . And up popped Zaim.

At the extinction of this experiment, disillusionment set in. One more try was made—this time in Persia. The Ataturk there was to have been General Ali Razmara. He too

was assassinated. The State Department's sudden self-confidence evaporated. Since then, American policy in the Near East has seemed hazy and confused. There has even been a descent into appeasement—witness the vote in the Security Council on the quarrel between Israel and Syria on the Huleh area. Britain, in the meantime, has pulled herself together, established excellent relations with Israel, and is fairly methodically evolving a new approach.

AND Russia—ubiquitous specter—how does she fit in? Her Cairo and Beirut legations receive more visitors in the sixty minutes after midnight than in all of the daylight hours; but on the whole she is not abnormally active. She has no need to be, so long as bakshish, maalesh, the Arab governments, and Western indecision do her work for her. One typical feudal bey or pasha is worth more to her than ten paid agitators—and King Farouk alone is worth a hundred. No Kremlin agents could have created more confusion in the Middle East than the "experts" overseeing Palestinian affairs from 1946 to 1949. No Communists in high office could weaken the Western powers more than they are deliberately weakening themselves at this moment by denying Israel arms so as to avoid offending the Arab League. After Turkey, Israel is the only significant military power in the Near East and the West's only firm friend. Arab regulars who were routed in Israel with little more than firecrackers are scarcely likely to do more than take to their heels at the first rumble from the Red Army, and the Arab masses will give the Russians, if ever they cross the Caucasus, the same ignorant opportunist welcome as was prepared for Rommel in Cairo and Alexandria.

Israel alone in the Near East knows what democracy is and has the will to preserve it: but she is not being allowed to prepare herself lest the pashas protest. Oriental obtuseness has crept into a corner of Western reasoning now. Who cares if Russia seizes the Eastern Mediterranean? So long as Azam is not annoyed. . . . Maalesh!